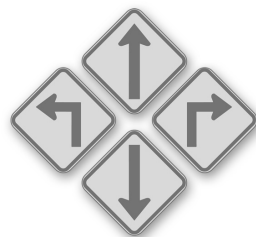


Introduction

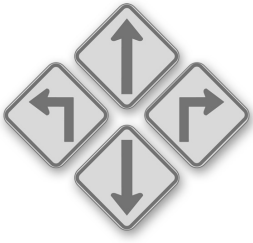


The full integration of people with disabilities into our Nation's communities is a primary goal of the President's New Freedom Initiative. In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Olmstead v. L.C.* held that States should provide community-based services and supports to people with disabilities to enable them to live in the most integrated settings possible. However, for many, community integration is still a dream. Most communities nationwide are still struggling to develop the necessary services and supports. One of the greatest challenges is providing the transportation necessary for people with disabilities to participate in society.

Community integration for mental health consumers and other people with disabilities requires much more than a place to live and outpatient medical services. In *Olmstead*, the Court noted, "Confinement in an institution severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement, and cultural enrichment." For community integration to occur, people with disabilities must have the opportunity to participate in these important activities. Transportation is the vital link to all of these activities. Therefore, transportation is at the very heart of community integration.

Unfortunately, for many people with disabilities—particularly mental health consumers—obtaining transportation is extremely difficult, although ongoing initiatives seek to improve access. As the President acknowledged in his February 2004 Executive Order (No. 13330), "A broad range of Federal program funding allows for the purchase or provision of transportation services and resources for persons who are transportation disadvantaged. Yet, in too many communities, these services and resources are fragmented, unused, or altogether unavailable."

“(Having) mobility is the only way you can fulfill your recovery. Everyone has the right to access (community-based services and supports), but to have access, you need mobility.”
—Consumer



Since 1999, the Consumer Affairs staff of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has held mental health consumer meetings in several Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regions to gain input and recommendations from consumers on how to improve publicly funded mental health services. Lack of adequate transportation that limits access to treatment, employment, and socialization is one of the most critical problems identified in the course of those meetings.

SAMHSA/CMHS developed this report in response to the findings, to delineate specific transportation barriers and to discuss ways to address or resolve them for mental health consumers. After existing literature was reviewed, consumers and administrators across the Nation were interviewed (see List of Contributors at the end of this report). The project team chose the key informants after preliminary research and consultations with representatives of both the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Easter Seals Project ACTION. Selections were based on the informants' familiarity with transportation issues in urban, suburban, and rural areas throughout the Nation. In addition, information was gathered from several programs identified as offering particularly innovative approaches to providing transportation to mental health consumers and other people considered to be "transportation disadvantaged."